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**Title:** Differences between Gothic and Greek in terms of the definite article : the case of the gospel of Matthew

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**Citation style:** Kida Ireneusz. (2015). Differences between Gothic and Greek in terms of the definite article : the case of the gospel of Matthew W: E. Bogdanowska-Jakubowska (red.), "Inność/różnorodność w języku i kulturze" (s. 29-42). Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.



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## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GOTHIC AND GREEK IN TERMS OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE – THE CASE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### Abstrakt

**Różnice między językiem gockim a językiem greckim w użyciu przedimka określonego – na przykładzie Ewangelii Św. Mateusza**

W artykule tym przedstawię wyniki zautomatyzowanej analizy opartej na ręcznie skonstruowanym korpusie wybranych różnic w tekście Nowego Testamentu między językiem gockim a biblijną greką. Różnice te dotyczą zachowania przedimka określonego w języku greckim i jego odpowiednika w gockim. Chociaż powszechnie przyjęto, że gocki dosłownie idzie śladem greki, to kwestia przedimka określonego jest szczególnie ciekawa ze względu na fakt, że w gockim ta kategoria gramatyczna często nie jest stosowana w miejscu, w którym stosowana ona jest w greckim. Moje badanie, niezmiernie ułatwione dzięki przeze mnie skonstruowanemu korpusowi z ręcznie wprowadzanymi anotacjami, ma na celu przedstawienie istotnych różnic między tymi dwoma językami w tym względzie. Wybrałem przedimek określony jako przedmiot analizy, ponieważ jego użycie w języku gockim nie zostało jeszcze szczegółowo zbadane.

### 1. Introduction

The Germanic language subfamily of the Indo-European language family includes around 50 Germanic languages worldwide, and English and German alone have around 500 million speakers. Germanic languages are descendants of Proto-Germanic, a reconstructed language, and are

divided into three large groups, namely West Germanic languages, North Germanic languages and East Germanic languages. The West Germanic group is represented by such languages as English, German and Dutch, the North Germanic group by Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish, whereas the East Germanic group, now extinct, is represented by such languages as Gothic, Vandalic and Burgundian. As far as Gothic is concerned, it was the language of the Goths, a Teutonic tribe, who most likely came from Sweden. Generally speaking, the kingdom of the Goths extended from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and it was an important power between the 3rd and the 4th century AD. Around the second half of the 4th century they divided into two separate groups, namely Ostrogoths (i.e. Eastern Goths) and Visigoths (i.e. Western Goths). The former group inhabited the shores of the Black Sea, whereas the latter one went west to Spain, Italy and Africa. Whereas the Western Goths assimilated with other nations and lost their language relatively early, the Eastern Goths preserved their language much longer, and it was still spoken in the 18th century in some places in the Black Sea region, such as Crimea for example.

## 2. Gothic texts

The earliest written testimonies of Gothic are a few words in the form of early runic inscriptions (between 3 and 12) found on spearheads, buckles and spindle whorls dated to as early as the 2nd century AD. Other written texts in Gothic are the Gothic calendar, containing but a few scattered sentences and names, four signatures and a short statement on the Naples Deed, and one signature and a short statement on the Arezzo Deed. However, by far the most important, and at the same time the largest, written documents in Gothic are the Gothic Bible and the *Skeireins* (Goth. *explanation*).

As regards the Gothic Bible, Falluomini (2013) notes that its translation from Greek by Wulfila (and probably a number of his disciples) most likely began orally in Dacia, where Wulfila was a lector, and completed in Moesia Inferior, after he settled near Nicopolis and Istrum, where he lived in the years 347–348. Since the original manuscript of the Gothic

Bible was lost, we have to rely on (incomplete) manuscripts that were made later on the basis of the original manuscript. In the present day, there are several such incomplete manuscripts which were most likely made in Italy in the first third of the 6th century. They transmit part of the original: around three-fifths of the Gospels and around two-thirds of the Pauline Epistles, as well as a small portion of the Old Testament, namely Nehemiah 5–7. The manuscripts are the following: *Codex Argenteus*, *Codex Ambrosianus A*, *Codex Ambrosianus B*, *Codex Ambrosianus C*, *Codex Ambrosianus D*, *Codex Ambrosianus E*, *Codex Carolinus*, *Codex Gissensis*, *Codex Taurinensis* and *Codex Vaticanus Latinus* 5750.

As regards the numerous texts of the Greek New Testament, Saifulah (2000), following Metzger (1971), notes that they are grouped into four major distinctive text types: (a) the Alexandrian text-type, (b) the Western text-type, (c) the Caesarean text-type, and (d) the Byzantine text-type, which is regarded as the latest of the several distinctive text-types of the New Testament. Koester (2002) notes that it is the Byzantine text-type that served as the translation basis for the Gothic Bible. Nevertheless, he says that although the Gothic translation is based on the Byzantine text type of Greek, it also contains many features of the Western and Alexandrian text types. As far as *Skeireins* is concerned, after the Gothic Bible it is the most extensive Gothic written document. The text contains six fragments with a commentary on the Gospel of John and it is very important for the understanding of the Gothic language due to the fact that it was written directly in Gothic and was not a mere word-for-word translation from another language, as was the case with the Gothic Bible.

### 3. The Gothic Bible – a literal translation from biblical Greek?

The type of Gothic present in the Gothic Bible is normally said to be a literal translation of Greek. This is confirmed, for example, by Falluomini (2013: 330), who says that the Gothic version is a word-for-word translation of the Greek source text. Also Bean (1983) says that the Gothic Bible tends to be a rather literal translation of the Greek Bible. Moreover, Axel (2007: 33) observes that Wulfila's translation of the Bible is a very

close rendering of the Greek text. Although the authors unanimously agree as to the Gothic text being a rather faithful translation of Greek, they are aware of the fact that there are a number of places where the two languages diverge from each other. Such divergences are very helpful in identifying the native characteristics of the Gothic language.

Bean (1983: 51) provides a list of discrepancies, as indicated by McKnight (1897), in the translation from Greek into Gothic by Wulfila: (a) Greek postpositive particles may be placed in the initial position in Gothic, (b) object pronouns tend to follow the verb in Gothic, (c) the possessive pronoun follows its noun, (d) the demonstrative precedes its noun, as does the nominal genitive, (e) the past participle precedes the finite verb, (f) predicate nouns precede the copula, and (g) the verb occurs in the clause-final position. Bean also enumerates the differences between the Greek original and the Gothic translation, as given by Fourquet (1938), namely (a) the negative immediately precedes the verb, (b) a copula is frequently added with the order being N Adj-Copula, (c) in other instances a verb is added in the postposed position, (d) Gothic tends to avoid low-content verbs in the initial position by employing either an adverb or the intensifier *-uh*; the ability of the particles to appear initially and that of nouns to occur in the final position suggests that the initial position was not the position of emphasis in Gothic, but the final position had this function, (e) Gothic definitely prefers the OV word order with the exception of the placement of the pronoun object after the verb in some circumstances. To these can be added some of the features of Gothic provided by Axel (2007; after Eythórsson 1995), such as (a) verb fronting systematically occurred in Gothic imperative clauses, (b) the (S)OV-pattern seems to be the native base order (unlike in Fourquet 1938), (c) in imperatives and in negated clauses the Gothic verb usually precedes its complements, (d) often Gothic uses a combination of a verb and a (non-pronominal) complement in place of Greek intransitive verbs, (e) in *wh*-interrogatives there is a tendency for the finite verb to be placed directly after the *wh*-phrase at the left periphery. Moreover, Falluomini (2013: 330), says that

[i]n cases where there are not any textual variants in the Greek tradition, the word order of the Gothic translation follows closely the order

of the Greek text. Therefore, it can be supposed that the deviations of the Gothic text – when they are not traceable to Gothic syntactical particularities – depend upon the Greek Vorlage. Doubts can arise concerning the position of the demonstrative, personal, and possessive pronouns.

Finally, below I present some other differences between Gothic and Greek that I noticed in my own research:

1. Gothic often omits the demonstrative pronouns with the function of definite articles in places where Greek uses definite articles.
2. However, when Gothic imitates Greek absolute structures, it employs the dative case (dative absolute structures), whereas Greek employs the genitive case (genitive absolute structures).
3. Gothic often uses a different case from Greek.
4. Gothic uses the present tense in places where Greek uses a future tense.
5. Gothic often uses a reflexive verb in places where Greek uses an ordinary verb.
6. Gothic often uses dependent clauses where Greek uses absolute structures.
7. On the whole, Gothic employs more analytical structures than Greek.

In the sections to follow, I will concentrate on point 1 of the above list, namely on the omission of the demonstrative pronouns by Gothic. Before I present numerical data, however, I will first briefly characterize the definite article in biblical Greek and the demonstrative pronoun in Gothic, and then the methodology I employed in my analysis.

#### 4. The definite article in Greek and the demonstrative pronoun in Gothic

On the one hand, Gothic, unlike Modern English and Modern German, was a language that most likely did not have a distinct category of the definite or of the indefinite article. On the other hand, although Greek possessed a distinct category of the definite article, it did not

possess the category of the indefinite article. Therefore, it follows that the problem of the lack of use of the indefinite article in Gothic disappears because neither Greek nor Gothic had this category. As regards the problem of the definite article, the situation becomes much more complicated, because Greek had this category and Gothic seemingly did not. However, Gothic, wherever it could, used the demonstrative pronouns with the function of the definite article. As a matter of fact, definite articles in early Germanic languages did not differ from the demonstrative pronouns, and thus it is difficult to draw a clear dividing line and say when the demonstrative pronoun was ending and the definite article was beginning. Therefore, in Gothic it is hard to judge whether one deals with demonstrative pronouns or definite articles, which actually come from them. However, for reasons of unity, I will use the term definite article also for Gothic henceforth.

As regards the definite article in biblical Greek, it had four cases, two numbers, and three genders, as presented below:

Table 1. The definite article in biblical Greek

Case	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	singular	plural	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nominative	ὁ	οἱ	ἡ	αἱ	τό	τά
Genitive	τοῦ	τῶν	τῆς	τῶν	τοῦ	τῶν
Dative	τῷ	τοῖς	τῇ	ταῖς	τῷ	τοῖς
Accusative	τόν	τούς	τήν	τάς	τό	τά

Source: <http://www.ilibio.org/koine/greek/lessons/noun2dcl.html> (last accessed 27.07.2015).

On the other hand, as regards the definite article in Gothic, it had the following forms:

Table 2. The definite article in Gothic

Case	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	singular	plural	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nominative	sa	þái	sō	þōs	þata	þō
Genitive	þis	þizē	þizōs	þizō	þis	þizē
Dative	þamma	þáim	þizái	þáim	þamma	þáim
Accusative	þana	þans	sō	þōs	þata	þō

Source: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/eieol/gotol-3-X.html> (last accessed 27.07.2015).

It can be seen in the table that, similarly to Greek, the Gothic definite article had four cases, two numbers, and three genders. Therefore, it was quite easy to render the Greek definite article by means of the Gothic one.

On the basis of my analysis, whose results are presented below, I can say that in the translation of the Bible from Greek, Wulfila often employed Gothic definite articles in places where Greek used them, in order to reflect the original text more closely. At the same time my analysis also shows that it was quite unnatural for Gothic to use definite articles in places where Greek did, and therefore Wulfila avoided this practice. Before I provide the numerical data obtained from my analysis, I will present the methodology lying behind this analysis.

## 5. A corpus-based methodology

I analysed the whole of the Gospel of Matthew of the Gothic Bible. The Bible, as well as the remaining Gothic texts, are available at the free official website of the Wulfila Project.<sup>1</sup> The Gothic version of the Bible represents the *Codex Argenteus*, whereas the Greek version represents the Alexandrian text type; actually it is the Streitberg's (1919) modified version, which represents the Alexandrian text-type of biblical Greek. Although the Greek version used by the Wulfila Project is only partially useful for the comparison with Gothic, it is safe as regards the employment of the definite article, because this version and other Greek versions of the Bible do not differ significantly in this respect. However, as regards other points of comparison, it is advisable to take into account also other versions of the Greek Bible, representing other Greek text-types apart from the Alexandrian one, because it is not exactly known from which Greek manuscript(s) Gothic was translated. It can easily be noticed that the Gothic translation on one occasion follows the Byzantine text-type, on another – the Alexandrian text-type, on yet another – the Western text-type, and on other occasions it may also be following some other text-types. Therefore, using a single edition of the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wulfila.be/gothic/browse/> (last accessed 27.07.2015).



Greek Bible is not a correct procedure without contrasting it with other editions. Although Streitberg's modified version is reliable in terms of the occurrence of the definite article, I compared it with other Greek versions so as to make sure it can be used in the analysis.

My analysis was a corpus-based one and it involved the preparation of an electronic annotated corpus in order to be able to search for the points of difference by means of a computer. First I extracted the entire Gospel of Matthew from the Wulfila Project and inserted it into a Word Office document. The corpus consists of about 80 pages and it contains the Gothic and Greek versions of the Bible, as well as an English translation. Moreover, I inserted in various Greek editions representing different text-types in order to identify which Greek text is followed by the Gothic text; however, in the case of the definite article, as I mentioned above, it was not necessary but I needed to be completely sure of that, and hence the procedure. Afterwards I analysed the Gothic text sentence by sentence and compared it with the Greek text(s). When I found a point at which Greek and Gothic were different with respect to the use of the definite article, I used a special annotation scheme in the form of tags for marking this point. The annotation scheme was invented by myself for the purpose of my research and it should by no means be understood as a universal one, or the only possible one.

In the following tables I present all the tags that I employed in my annotation scheme. The first column in each table contains the different kinds of tags that I used, in the second column are the descriptions of the tags, and in the third column there are the numbers of the occurrences of the points of difference represented by the respective tags.

Table 3 displays all the possible configurations in which the Gothic nominative case of the definite article is involved:

Table 3. The nominative case

Tag	Description of the tag	Occurrences
1n-/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the nominative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the nominative case	149
1n-g/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the nominative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the genitive case	1

Table 3 continued

1n-d/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the nominative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the dative case	0
1n-a/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the nominative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the accusative case	0
2n-/	Neither Gothic nor Greek use a definite article in the nominative case	72
1n+/	Gothic uses a definite article in the nominative case, whereas Greek does not use a definite article in the nominative case	1
2n+/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article in the nominative case	71
2n+g/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the nominative case and in the genitive case respectively	0
2n+d/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the nominative case and in the dative case respectively	0
2n+a/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the nominative case and in the accusative case respectively	1

As can be seen, going from top to bottom it follows from the table that altogether there are 149 cases in which Gothic does not use the definite article in the nominative case and Greek does, 1 case in which Gothic does not use the definite article in the nominative case and Greek uses a definite article in the genitive case, 72 cases in which neither Gothic nor Greek use the definite article in the nominative case, 1 case in which Gothic uses the definite article in the nominative case and Greek does not, 71 cases in which both Gothic and Greek use the definite article in the nominative case, and 1 case in which Gothic uses a definite article in the nominative case and Greek in the accusative case. The other kinds of configurations are unattested in my corpus.

Table 4 on the following page displays all the possible configurations in which the Gothic genitive case of the definite article is involved.

Going from top to bottom, it follows from Table 4 that there are 61 cases in which Gothic does not use a definite article in the genitive case and Greek does, 36 cases in which neither Gothic nor Greek use a definite article in the genitive case, and 11 cases in which both Gothic

and Greek use a definite article in the genitive case. The rest of the possibilities are unattested in my corpus.

Table 4. The genitive case

Tag	Description of the tag	Occurrences
1g-/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the genitive case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the genitive case	61
1g-n/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the genitive case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the nominative case	0
1g-d/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the genitive case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the dative case	0
1g-a/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the genitive case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the accusative case	0
2g-/	Neither Gothic nor Greek use a definite article in the genitive case	36
1g+/	Gothic uses a definite article in the genitive case, whereas Greek does not use a definite article in the genitive case	0
2g+/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article in the genitive case	11
2g+n/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the genitive case and in the nominative case respectively	0
2g+d/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the genitive case and in the dative case respectively	0
2g+a/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the genitive case and in the accusative case respectively	0

Table 5 displays all the possible configurations in which the Gothic dative case of the definite article is involved:

Table 5. The dative case

Tag	Description of the tag	Occurrences
1d-/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the dative case, whereas Greek uses an article in the dative case	96
1d-g/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the dative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the genitive case	28

Table 5 continued

1d-n/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the dative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the dative case	0
1d-a/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the dative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the accusative case	26
2d-/	Neither Gothic nor Greek use a definite article in the dative case	34
1d+/	Gothic uses a definite article in the dative case, whereas Greek does not use a definite article in the dative case	0
2d+/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article in the dative case	26
2d+g/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the dative case and in the genitive case respectively	12
2d+n/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the dative case and in the nominative case respectively	0
2d+a/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the dative case and in the accusative case respectively	3

From Table 5 it follows that there are 96 cases in which Gothic does not use a definite article in the dative case and Greek does, 28 cases in which Gothic does not use a definite article in the dative case and Greek uses a definite article in the genitive case, 26 cases in which Gothic does not use a definite article in the dative case and Greek uses a definite article in the accusative case, 34 cases in which neither Gothic nor Greek use a definite article in the dative case, 26 cases in which both Gothic and Greek use a definite article in the dative case, 12 cases in which Gothic uses a definite article in the dative case and Greek in the genitive case, and 3 cases in which Gothic uses a definite article in the dative case and Greek in the accusative case. The rest of the configurations are unattested.

Table 6 on the following page displays all the possible configurations in which the Gothic accusative case of the definite article is involved.

Table 6. The accusative case

Tag	Description of the tag	Occurrences
1a-/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the accusative case, whereas Greek uses an article in the accusative case	95
1a-g/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the accusative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the genitive case	13
1a-d/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the accusative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the dative case	3
1a-n/	Gothic does not use a definite article in the accusative case, whereas Greek uses a definite article in the nominative case	0
2a-/	Neither Gothic nor Greek use a definite article in the accusative case	82
1a+/	Gothic uses a definite article in the accusative case, whereas Greek does not use a definite article in the accusative case	0
2a+/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article in the accusative case	47
2a+g/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the accusative case and in the genitive case respectively	5
2a+d/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the accusative case and in the dative case respectively	1
2a+n/	Both Gothic and Greek use a definite article, in the accusative case and in the nominative case respectively	0

From Table 6 it follows that there are 95 cases in which Gothic does not use a definite article in the accusative case and Greek does, 13 cases in which Gothic does not use a definite article in the accusative case and Greek uses a definite article in the genitive case, 3 cases in which Gothic does not use a definite article in the accusative case and Greek uses a definite article in the dative case, 82 cases in which neither Gothic nor Greek use a definite article in the accusative case, 47 cases in which both Gothic and Greek use a definite article in the accusative case, 5 cases in which Gothic uses a definite article in the accusative cases and Greek in the genitive case, and 1 case in which Gothic uses a definite article in the accusative case and Greek in the nominative case. The remaining configurations are unattested.

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## 6. Conclusion

My analysis demonstrates that Gothic often faithfully follows Greek in terms of the use of the definite article. Nevertheless, there are numerous occasions on which the definite article is not present in Gothic, although it is present in Greek. This phenomenon most likely testifies to the fact that it was rather unnatural for Gothic to employ definite articles before nouns, and when it used them, it was rather motivated by the need to do a faithful translation from the original Greek text. At this stage of my research it is difficult to specify to what extent the definite article was used artificially in Gothic. Since there is a very limited direct access to the Gothic language (i.e. basically via Greek), conclusions as to what kind of grammatical structure it actually possessed should be drawn with a lot of caution, as otherwise one can end up obtaining a distorted picture. Therefore it is necessary to analyse one by one the remaining gospels of the Gothic Bible, as well as the *Skeireins*, in terms of the definite article in order to make a synchronic comparison of the data obtained. In doing so it will probably be possible to discern clear regularities in the use or lack of use of the definite article at the different grammatical forms of Gothic nouns.

Last but not least, it was possible to observe the behaviour of the Greek and Gothic definite articles thanks to the electronic corpus that I compiled for the purposes of this analysis. In order to be able to analyse such syntactic phenomena as the occurrence of the definite article in larger texts, it is indispensable to create one's own annotated corpora for automated analysis, due to the fact that such corpora are not available on the market yet. My annotated corpus still finds itself in an initial phase, as I am going to extend it to the remaining Gothic texts and also to take into account other syntactic phenomena, basically the ones concerning the points of difference between Gothic and Greek. The results of the further corpus-analysis of Gothic and Greek will be presented in subsequent papers.

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